

## **Phase II**

### **Elementary Facilities Task Force**

**Monday, September 24, 2007**

**Mt. Hope High School**

#### **MINUTES**

**Present: Karen Lynch, Chair**

**Diana Campbell**

**David Dugan**

**Paul Silva**

**Dr. Edward Mara, Superintendent**

**The meeting of the Phase II Elementary Facilities Task Force was called to order by Chairperson Karen Lynch at 5:00 p.m. In attendance at this meeting was a large group of concerned parents from both the Byfield and Reynolds schools.**

**Chairperson Lynch explained to those in attendance that this session was to be an informal brainstorming session. She continued to add that the Task Force had been given the charge of coming up with the best possible scenario which would satisfy both communities; deciding what would be best for the families and children involved. It was explained that no formal decisions would be made at the subcommittee level and that all decisions were made at full school committee meetings.**

The concept of closing both Byfield and Reynolds schools at the same time is a new issue. Karen reminded those in attendance that Phase I originally entailed closing down only one school at a time. David Dugan expressed his concern that a decision not be made in a hurry. Time to explore all scenarios is crucial to make the best informed decision. A decision that would set the structure of the district for years to come cannot be rushed. All Task Force members agreed that taking a step back and making an informed decision would benefit all those involved.

Diana Campbell, committee member, asked if the Administration would be able to let the committee know what type of situation would exist if both schools were closed at the same time. Dr. Mara explained that this is the scenario that the Administration has been reviewing. Dr. Mara emphatically stated to those in attendance that it is not the desire of the District to end the Arts Magnet program. Dr. Mara shared that the motive of the administration is to see the Arts Magnet program grow. It was explained that some of the wonderful aspects of the Arts Magnet program are being implemented into the other elementary schools in the District. For example, Mr. Mello is implementing group meetings similar to the Arts Magnet Town Meetings.

Karen Lynch emphasized that the communities of Byfield and Reynolds deserve a home. She mentioned that elementary schools like Rockwell, Guiteras and Hugh Cole have had the opportunity

through the Phase I bond to be renovated. Now it is time for Byfield and Reynolds to find a home.

Closing both schools at the same time also has implications that need to be discussed with Town officials. When schools are vacated they are turned over to the town. Town officials need to be prepared to take over Byfield and Reynolds simultaneously. This is another step in the process that needs to be discussed with the appropriate people and decided upon.

Paul Silva spoke up and reiterated the fact that the Task Force needs to slow down and to make the best decision possible rather be pressured to make an immediate decision. David Dugan reiterated Dr. Mara's sentiments and stated that he has never heard Dr. Mara suggest that he is not pleased with the Arts Magnet Program nor ever mentioned any intentions of closing the program down.

In answer to a question one parent raised, Karen explained that initially the Phase I initiative included the renovations and additions to Colt Andrews. Phase II would encompass the decision to include either an addition to Byfield or the building of a new elementary school in Bristol. She also explained that when Phase I was initially presented and voted on it did include a second phase process.

At this time, it was asked if several students from Arts Magnet school, including alumni, could stand and share their positive experiences

**while attending Arts Magnet. (See Attachment A.)**

**Paul Silva explained that the Elementary Facilities Task Force was charged with the responsibility of realistically looking into the number of children in the district and availability of classroom seats for these children. Paul included the suggestion that closing one school, relocating those children to Colt Andrews and taking care of the immediate need. Then to continue with exploring the scenarios and considering the feedback from those scenarios. Diana Campbell explained that fiscal responsibility also comes into play with any decision to close both schools at the same time. Moving the children from Byfield to Colt Andrews would leave an empty track. Suggestions on how to fill the empty track and what to do with the student at Reynolds could be further discussed.**

**At this point, David Dugan made a motion to recommend to the full School Committee that they NOT vote on October 9th regarding the closing of both buildings at the same time to give more time for consideration. Karen Lynch seconded this motion. The subcommittee voted 3:1; it was approved that the Subcommittee Task Force would recommend to the full school committee that they NOT vote on October 9th. This would give the subcommittee more time to make an informed decision. Paul Silva reminded those in attendance that the motion for recommendation that the school committee not vote on October 9th does not mean it would be accepted by the school**

**committee. The school Committee is not bound by decisions made by the subcommittee.**

**Dr. Mara then commented that it is wonderful to see so many parents in attendance who are concerned about their children's future and would like to have the opportunity to share their ideas and discuss the many possibilities and scenarios for a final outcome. However, he reminded everyone that the time postponed in making a final decision would be time that could be used working on the final plans. He also clarified the basis for some of the Arts Magnet assessment statistics that were spoken about during the meeting previously. He reiterated that all the elementary schools in the district are high performing and are very successful. A higher level of special education and ESL students account for the differences in test scores. The population at Reynolds is not as diverse.**

### **Adjournment**

**Paul Silva motioned to adjourn the meeting at 6:30 p.m. this motion was seconded by Karen Lynch.**